WE CLAIM:

1.   A   method   of   creating/terminating   a   connection
      associated with an end-to-end path defined through a
      communications network, the method comprising steps
      of:

      triggering substantially parallel cross-connection
           download/undownload   processes   in   each
           intermediate node of the end-to-end path; and

      propagating a confirmation message indicative of
           successful   completion   of   respective
           download/undownload   processes   in   each
           intermediate node to an end-node of the path.

2.   A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the step of
      triggering substantially parallel cross-connection
      download/undownload processes comprises steps of:

      propagating a trigger message hop-by-hop through the
           end-to-end path; and

      at each intermediate node of the end-to-end path,
           upon receipt of the trigger message:

           forwarding the trigger message to a next node of
                the path with minimum delay; and

           initiating the download/undownload process.

3.   A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the step of
      propagating a confirmation message comprises, at each
      intermediate node of the end-to-end path, steps of:

      receiving the confirmation message;

      detecting successful completion of the respective
           download/undownload process; and

forwarding the confirmation message to a next node of
the path.

4. A method of downloading/undownloading a cross-
connection through a node within an end-to-end path
of a communications network, the method comprising
steps of:

receiving a trigger message and a confirmation
message from a first adjacent node of the end-to-
end path;

forwarding the trigger message to a next adjacent
node of the path with minimum delay;

triggering downloading/undownloading of the cross-
connection; and

subsequently forwarding the confirmation message to
the next adjacent node upon successful completion
of the download/undownload.

5. A program for downlading/undownloading a cross-
connection through a node within an end-to-end path
of a communications network, the program being
adapted to control the node for:

receiving a trigger message and a confirmation
message from a first adjacent node of the end-to-
end path;

forwarding the trigger message to a next adjacent
node of the path with minimum delay;

triggering downloading/undownloading of the cross-
connection; and

subsequently forwarding the confirmation message to the next adjacent node upon successful completion of the download/undownload.